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Russian Ambassador to U.S. Criticizes RT's Foreign Agent Registration

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Russia's ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov (Stanislav Krasilnikov / TASS)

Russia's ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov has slammed the Kremlin-run RT news network being designated a U.S. foreign agent as Moscow mulls retaliatory measures.

RT's chief editor Margarita Simonyan and the U.S. Department of Justice on Monday announced that RT's American branch had met a deadline to register as a foreign agent.

The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which was designed to target Nazi propaganda, has been a driving force behind escalating U.S.-Russia tensions in recent weeks. In a January U.S. intelligence report, RT and Sputnik were singled out for contributing to Russia's influence over the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Related article: What You Need to Know About RT's Pending Foreign Agent Registration

Official documents show a local production company called T&R Productions has registered as an agent of a Moscow-based entity owned by the Russian government. The company said it was "not sufficiently aware of" who funds the entity.

During a visit to RT's Washington office, Russia's newly appointed U.S. ambassador, Anatoly Antonov, described RT's registration as "a bad thing."

"We see this as an unfriendly step," the state-run TASS news agency cited Antonov as telling reporters.

He also expressed his support for RT during the visit, saying "we're very concerned about what's happening around RT and want to assure you that we're with you."

"It's highly important that you paint a real picture of what's happening in the world."

Russia could strike back at all foreign media, not just U.S.-based outlets, in retaliation, the Vedomosti business daily reported on Monday. CNN, VOA, Radio Liberty and Deutsche Welle are expected to face restrictions in legislation that could be passed by lawmakers as early as this week.

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